



SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

[Docket No. SSA-2022-0065]

Request for Information on the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 Learning Agenda

AGENCY: Social Security Administration.

ACTION: Request for information.

SUMMARY: The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act) requires Federal agencies to develop an evidence-building plan, referred to as a Learning Agenda, to identify and address policy questions relevant to agency programs, policies, and regulations. Through this Request for Information (RFI), we seek public input to help us expand our ongoing efforts to update and revise priority questions from our evidence-building activities.

DATES: To ensure that your comments are considered, we must receive them no later than [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*].

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by any one of three methods—Internet, fax, or mail. Do not submit the same comments multiple times or by more than one method. Regardless of which method you choose, please state that your comments refer to Docket No. SSA-2022-0065 so that we may associate your comments with the correct docket.

Caution: You should be careful to include in your comments only information that you wish to make publicly available. We strongly urge you not to include in your comments any personal information, such as Social Security numbers or medical information.

1. Internet: We strongly recommend that you submit your comments via the Internet. Please visit the Federal eRulemaking portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>. Use the Search function to find docket number SSA-2022-0065. The system will issue a tracking number to confirm your submission. You will not be able to view your comment immediately because we must post each comment manually. It may take up to a week for your comment to be viewable.

2. Fax: Fax comments to 1(833) 410-1631.

3. Mail: Mail your comments to the Office of Regulations and Reports Clearance, Social Security Administration, 6401 Security Boulevard, 3rd Floor (East) Altmeyer Building, Baltimore, Maryland 21235–6401.

Comments are available for public viewing on the Federal eRulemaking portal at <http://www.regulations.gov> or in person, during regular business hours, by arranging with the contact person identified below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Robert Weathers, Office of Retirement and Disability Policy, Social Security Administration, 6401 Security Boulevard, Baltimore, Maryland 21235-6401, (410) 615-6965. For information on eligibility or filing for benefits, call our national toll-free number, 1-800-325-0778, or visit our Internet site, Social Security Online, at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Evidence Act¹ requires Federal agencies to develop an evidence-building plan, referred to as a Learning Agenda, to identify and address policy questions relevant to agency programs, policies, and regulations.² As part of the process of developing a Learning Agenda, the law states that agencies “shall

¹ Pub. L. 115-435, 132 Stat. 5529.

² 5 U.S.C. 312(a); Office of Mgmt. & Budget, Exec. Office of the President, OMB M-21-27, *Evidence-Based Policymaking: Learning Agendas and Annual Evaluation Plans* (2021), available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/M-21-27.pdf>.

consult with stakeholders, including the public, agencies, State and local governments, and representatives of non-governmental researchers.”³ We published our Fiscal Years 2022 – 2026 Learning Agenda in February 2022.⁴ Our Learning Agenda is intended to be a flexible document so we can pivot and adjust as needed when new evidence is generated or as priorities change. We last published an RFI notice on April 20, 2021,⁵ seeking public input to help us identify priority questions to guide our evidence-building activities.

Background

For nearly 90 years, we have administered programs and provided services that make a difference in millions of people’s lives. In fiscal year (FY) 2023, our programs will provide a combined total of about \$1.4 trillion in benefit payments to an average of over 70 million beneficiaries. The major programs we administer—the Old-Age Survivors and Disability Insurance program and the Supplemental Security Income program—provide an important source of economic security for millions of Americans. Our fundamental mission is to ensure equity and accessibility in delivering Social Security services by improving the customer experience and addressing systemic barriers to participation in our programs.

We conduct evidence-building activities that include pilot projects, demonstration projects, quantitative studies, qualitative studies, and mixed methods studies that inform important priorities, such as delivering services effectively, improving the way we conduct business, updating policies and regulations, and ensuring effective stewardship. For example, we conducted evidence-building activities relevant to our Equity Action Plan⁶ in accordance with Executive Order (E.O.) 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and

³ 5 U.S.C. 312(c).

⁴ Social Security Administration, Fiscal Years 2022 – 2026 Learning Agenda, *available at* https://www.ssa.gov/data/data_governance_board/SSA%20FY2022-2026%20Learning%20Agenda%20Final%20032322.pdf.

⁵ 86 FR 20585.

⁶ <https://www.ssa.gov/open/materials/SSA-EO-13985-Equity-Action-Plan.pdf>.

Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government,⁷ as well as E.O. 14058 on Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government.⁸ This aligns with our FYs 2022-2026 Agency Strategic Plan,⁹ which includes deepening our understanding of our customers, including a strategy of what drives their evolving service preferences.

We also conducted extramural research, demonstration projects, and outreach under sections 234, 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act (Act).¹⁰ Sections 234, 1110, and 1115 of the Act provide the waiver authority we need to conduct extramural research and demonstration projects, while section 1144 of the Act addresses outreach activities to inform and assist Medicare beneficiaries with low income who may be eligible for Medicare cost sharing or subsidized prescription drug coverage. We currently fund a range of projects designed to:

- Help us keep pace with advancements in medicine and technology;
- Modernize our vocational rules;
- Test work support models;
- Analyze program trends, gaps, and inconsistencies; and
- Measure the public's understanding of our programs, as well as the impact of program changes.

Request for Information

Through this RFI, we are asking interested persons, including stakeholders across public and private sectors who may be familiar with or interested in the work of our agency, for input on evidence-building activities that inform important priorities for our

⁷ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/>.

⁸ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/12/13/executive-order-on-transforming-federal-customer-experience-and-service-delivery-to-rebuild-trust-in-government/>.

⁹ Social Security Administration, FYs 2022-2026 Agency Strategic Plan, *available at* https://www.ssa.gov/agency/asp/materials/pdfs/SSA_Agency_Strategic_Plan_Fiscal_Years_2022-2026.pdf.

¹⁰ 42 U.S.C. 434, 1310, 1315, and 1320b-14, respectively.

agency, including those that are also related to the President’s broader priorities available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/priorities/>. We also seek input on future projects that will advance our mission.

We invite suggestions in various forms—as key questions to be answered, hypotheses to be tested, or problems to be investigated—that are focused on any area of our mission, including service delivery, operations, programs, policies, regulations, communication, and stewardship. The responses to this RFI that interested persons submit to us will inform our ongoing updates and revisions to priorities that guide evidence-building activities. We will analyze information collected from this RFI to inform the development of our Learning Agenda. This RFI is for information and planning purposes only and should not be construed as a solicitation or as an obligation on our part. We will not respond to comments we receive in response to this RFI, but will use the input to develop our Learning Agenda.

The Acting Commissioner of the Social Security Administration, Kilolo Kijakazi, Ph.D., M.S.W., having reviewed and approved this document, is delegating the authority to electronically sign this document to Faye I. Lipsky, who is the primary Federal Register Liaison for SSA, for purposes of publication in the *Federal Register*.

Faye I. Lipsky,
Federal Register Liaison,
Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs,
Social Security Administration.

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